

## ANNOUNCEMENT OF FEDERAL FUNDING OPPORTUNITY

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Federal Agency Name(s): National Ocean Service (NOS), National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), Department of Commerce

Funding Opportunity Title: FY13 Coral Reef Conservation Program Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants

Announcement Type: Initial

Funding Opportunity Number: NOAA-NOS-OCRM-2013-2003459

Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance (CFDA) Number: 11.482, Coral Reef Conservation Program

Dates: Complete applications must be submitted electronically via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 5:00 PM EDT on Thursday, November 1, 2012 to be considered for funding. If Grants.gov cannot be reasonably used, hard copy applications may be submitted by mail or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt by 5:00 PM EDT on Thursday, November 1, 2012.

Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that date and time will not be accepted. Applications submitted via U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received more than 10 business days following the postmarked closing date will not be accepted.

Funding Opportunity Description: The NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program, as authorized under the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, provides matching grants of financial assistance through the Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grant program to institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, commercial organizations, and local and Indian tribal government agencies. These awards are intended to support coral reef conservation projects in shallow water coral reef ecosystems, including reefs at mesophotic depths, in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and coral-dominated banks in U.S. portions of the Gulf of Mexico. Projects may be proposed in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands and the U.S. Pacific Remote Island Areas (PRIA), but these locations are not considered geographic priorities under this announcement. Proposals submitted to this competition must address at least one of the following four categories: 1) Fishing Impacts; 2) Land-Based Sources of Pollution; 3) Climate Change; and 4) Local and Emerging Management Issues. These categories are described in more detail in the full Federal Funding Opportunity announcement. All proposed work should be consistent with the Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) National Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 ([http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats\\_go.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf)) and/or the relevant Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities

(<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities>) developed for each of the seven states and territories. Proposals selected for funding through this solicitation will be implemented through a grant and will require a 1:1 match of non-Federal funds.

Funding for this program is subject to the availability of FY 2013 Congressional appropriations and is expected to range between approximately \$500,000 to approximately \$1,000,000. Funding will be divided among the U.S. Pacific and Atlantic regions to maintain the geographic balance of the Coral Grant Program portfolio overall, as required by the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000. NOAA expects that each applicant will request Federal funding at a funding level between \$30,000 and \$80,000 under this solicitation and that the average award size will be approximately \$50,000.

## FULL ANNOUNCEMENT TEXT

### I. Funding Opportunity Description

#### A. Program Objective

Coral reefs and associated seagrass and mangrove communities are among the most complex and diverse ecosystems on earth. They support important fishing and tourism industries, protect coasts from wave and storm damage, build tropical islands, contain an array of potential pharmaceuticals, and provide local communities with a source of food, materials and traditional activities.

As shallow-water, near shore communities, coral reef ecosystems are ecologically linked to adjacent watersheds and are highly vulnerable to human activity. Stresses in the coral reef environment include poor water quality from runoff and inadequate sewage treatment, destructive fishing practices, sedimentation, recreational overuse and misuse, and impacts from climate change.

To address these threats, Congress passed the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (Act), which established the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program (CRCP) and provided guidance for allocation of Federal funding toward efforts to conserve coral reef ecosystems in the U.S. and Internationally. As required in the Act, one of the primary functions of the CRCP is to provide financial assistance to external partners for coral reef conservation projects consistent with the Act and CRCP priorities. From 2002 to 2008, CRCP efforts were focused on priorities articulated in A National Coral Reef Action Strategy (<http://coris.noaa.gov/activities/actionstrategy>), which outlined the efforts needed to better understand coral reef ecosystems and reduce impacts from 13 key threats that had been identified by NOAA in conjunction with the U.S. Coral Reef Task Force.

In response to several factors, including an external program review in fall 2007, changes in program leadership, and international and threat abatement working group efforts, CRCP priorities were refined and redirected in 2008-2009. New program priorities were outlined in the CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 ([http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats\\_go.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf)) and the seven Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents (<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities>). These documents are relevant to all CRCP grant programs, but some may be more or less relevant to particular applicants. Please refer to the Program Priorities in Section I(B) for details on which of these documents is/are most applicable for this funding announcement.

As required under the Act, NOAA published the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (Grant Program) Implementation Guidelines (Guidelines) in Federal Register Vol.

67, No. 76, page 19396, on Friday, April 19, 2002. Based on CRCP efforts to realign the grant program with new CRCP priorities, a revision of the Guidelines was undertaken in fall of 2009 and final revised Guidelines were published on Thursday, August 12, 2010 in Federal Register Vol. 75, No. 155, page 48934. The Guidelines are available at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrcp/workwithus/funding/grants/welcome.html>.

All applications submitted in response to this FFO must be consistent with the requirements stated herein and the Guidelines. Funding is subject to the availability of Federal appropriations.

In FY 2013, the CRCP intends to initiate new awards in the following two funding categories:

1. CRCP State and Territorial Coral Reef Conservation Cooperative Agreements
2. CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants

All of the following information in this funding opportunity announcement pertains only to the CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants funding category.

#### B. Program Priorities

The Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants program will accept applications for projects that fall within at least one of the following four categories: (a) Fishing Impacts; (b) Land-Based Sources of Pollution; (c) Climate Change; and (d) Local and Emerging Management Needs. The awards will support only activities associated with shallow water coral reef ecosystems, including in mesophotic depths, in American Samoa, the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, Florida, Guam, Hawaii, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and coral-dominated banks in U.S. portions of the Gulf of Mexico. Projects may be proposed in the Northwestern Hawaiian Islands (NWHI) and the U.S. Pacific Remote Island Areas (PRIA), but these locations are not considered geographic priorities under this competition. Projects proposed in the NWHI and PRIA must include a statement explaining the relevance of project results to coral reef ecosystems located in the priority geographies noted above.

For the purpose of this solicitation, shallow water coral reef ecosystems include unconsolidated sediments (e.g., sand and mud); mangroves and other emergent vegetation; submerged vegetation (e.g., seagrass and macroalgae); hermatypic coral reefs and associated colonized hardbottom habitats (e.g., spur and groove, individual and aggregated patch reefs, and gorgonian colonized pavement and bedrock); and uncolonized hardbottom (e.g., reef rubble and uncolonized bedrock). Projects focused on coral reef ecosystems at mesophotic depths should clearly describe how the mesophotic reefs are substantially linked to shallow

water coral reefs (i.e., have a meaningful ecological connection between the mesophotic area and associated shallow water coral reefs) to be eligible under this competition.

The principal objective of this grant competition is to provide financial assistance to institutions of higher education, nonprofit organizations, commercial organizations, and local and Indian tribal governments to support domestic coral reef conservation projects in the United States. Proposals should address threats to coral reef ecosystems identified in the CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015

([http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats\\_go.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/currentgoals/resources/3threats_go.pdf)) and/or the Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents

(<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/strategy/reprioritization/managementpriorities>). These include threats from fishery impacts, land-based sources of pollution, and climate change, and those identified as local and emerging management needs.

Preference will be given to organizations with a demonstrated track record of conducting successful coral reef conservation projects; projects that involve community-based conservation activities; and projects that develop and disseminate high quality information and materials to relevant user groups and management agencies. Applicants must provide evidence of support (e.g., letter of support, co-principal investigator, or other indication of collaboration or project support) for the project by appropriate representatives of States or other government jurisdictions in which the project will be conducted. Applicants are encouraged to consult with all relevant local governmental and nongovernmental entities involved in coral reef activities in developing the application, and demonstrate collaboration among these entities.

Research activities are eligible only if: 1) the project conducts applied research that directly contributes to improved management; and 2) the project includes prompt mechanisms to disseminate information to resource managers in addition to peer-reviewed publications (e.g., training of managers to use information or direct presentations to managers on project activities and outcomes); or 3) the research activity is a listed Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priority, in which case the applicant must cite the specific priority and obtain a letter of support from the local coral reef management authority.

Proposed projects addressing the categories below should be consistent with CRCP Goals and Objectives 2010-2015 and the Jurisdictional Coral Reef Management Priorities documents referenced above. Applicants are also encouraged to show how the proposed activity contributes to other management efforts and plans (e.g., watershed management plans, conservation action plans, Local Action Strategies, communication and outreach strategies, and MPA management plans) if applicable, and provide a link to the specific document whenever possible.

Details of the four categories are as follows:

1. Fishing Impacts: Activities under this category must address at least one of the following topics:

- a. Obtaining essential life history and ecological information on key species or functional groups to support management actions that reduce the impacts of fishing;
- b. Addressing information gaps related to fishing effort on coral reef ecosystems by measuring fishing intensity, morality, frequency, area coverage, and/or community independence to inform management activities;
- c. Identifying and characterizing spawning sites, nursery habitats, other areas critical to particular life-history stages, biodiversity hotspots, or coral reef areas with the greatest resilience.

With regard to work in Marine Protected Areas (MPAs), applicants may focus on:

- d. Conducting applied biological, social, and economic research or monitoring to evaluate effectiveness of management actions;
- e. Increasing public compliance with fishery regulations and MPA regulations that reduce fishing impacts on coral reef ecosystems, such as through establishment of community watch groups and provision of training workshops for enforcement personnel and/or prior violators; and
- f. Developing targeted, locally-relevant outreach and communication strategies to increase community understanding and support for regulations to protect key coral reef ecosystems; and
- g. Developing and/or implementing sustainable financing mechanisms to support the continued operation of established marine protected areas containing coral reefs.

2. Land-Based Sources of Pollution (LBSP): Activities under this category must address at least one of the following topics:

- a. Working with local communities and jurisdictions to develop and implement watershed management plans or conservation action plans that have been developed for priority coral reef associated watersheds;
- b. Conducting applied research to address strategic scientific gaps that lead to informed management decisions related to planning and implementing activities in priority coral reef ecosystems and associated watersheds (e.g., identifying the causes and sources of pollution or estimating load reductions expected from implementation of specific management measures); and

c. Conducting targeted outreach to increase awareness and understanding of ecological and socioeconomic impacts of land-based pollution on coral reef to bolster local support for the implementation of watershed management plans or conservation action plans that have been developed for priority coral reef associated watersheds.

Preference will be given to projects that are located within priority watersheds identified in the Jurisdictional Management Priority documents that have established, approved watershed management plans and projects that are well-coordinated with ongoing activities sponsored by the local point of contact agency. Activities proposed under this category should focus on implementing projects from approved watershed management plans that reduce LBSP inputs to coral reef ecosystems. These projects will receive preference because they contribute to CRCP performance metric L1 PM2: Number of projects completed from approved Watershed Management Plans and Conservation Action Plans to reduce LBSP in priority coral reef areas. For more information about this and other CRCP performance metrics, please visit: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/howwework/#success>.

3. Climate Change and Ocean Acidification: Activities under this category must address at least one of the following topics:

a. Conducting socioeconomic assessments of the effects of climate impacts on reef-dependent social and economic systems through the application of established assessment protocols, such as the SocMon and SEM-Pasifika regional socioeconomic monitoring guidelines found at: [www.socmon.org](http://www.socmon.org);

b. Through process studies and modeling, developing integrated impact models of changes in coral reef ecosystems in response to the physical and chemical processes associated with climate change and ocean acidification, and the interactions of these processes with local stressors;

c. Translating climate forecasts and projections into products that are relevant and useable for improved coral reef ecosystem management and decision-making; and

d. Developing and testing intervention measures to reduce stress from climate change and ocean acidification on coral reef ecosystems.

Preference will be given to projects that contribute to CRCP performance metric C1 PM1: Number of new or enhanced tools implemented to improve management preparedness and response to climate change and ocean acidification. For more information about this and other CRCP performance metrics, please visit: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/howwework/#success>.

4. Local and Emerging Management Needs: For this category, the applicant should identify the specific management need that the proposed project will address and explain

how the proposed project activities and/or products will contribute to meeting the stated need. Activities under this category may only address the following topics:

- a. Directly reducing recreational use impacts to coral reefs, such as through the installation of mooring buoys;
- b. Reducing invasive species impacts to coral reef ecosystems, including projects that address the proliferation of lionfish (*Pterois volitans*) in Florida and the U.S. Caribbean and invasive algae and fish species in the Pacific Islands;
- c. Determining life history characteristics for ESA petitioned coral species that inhabit waters under U.S. jurisdiction (e.g., *Acropora cervicornis*, *Acropora palmata*, etc);
- d. Investigating coral diseases that are directly correlated with LBSP inputs or climate change impacts;
- e. Increasing the sustainability of the marine aquarium trade by:
  - 1) improving enforcement efforts through the provision of tools, such as field guides for enforcement and customs officers or mechanisms to detect illegal fishing methods, and relevant training intended to reduce illegal trade in coral reef species;
  - 2) assessing the status of the marine ornamental/aquarium trade involving coral reef species found in U.S. waters, such as by quantifying the ecological impacts associated with aquarium fisheries and the removal of rare and endemic organisms from U.S. coral reefs.
  - 3) developing educational materials for hobbyists to reduce the mortality of species kept in home aquariums.

All projects funded through this competition are expected to result in tangible and significant improvements in the condition of coral reef ecosystems. To achieve this outcome, applicants should specify the activities they will undertake as well as the specific outputs and products that are expected to result from funded proposals. Specific outputs may include:

- a) Support to management authorities in the form of management plans, legislation, regulations or policies, best management practices, communication and outreach tools, and/or applied research aimed at enhancing local capacity to conserve coral reef resources;
- b) Environmental data, including recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans and atmosphere, as well as correlative data, such as socio-economic data and media (recordings, photos, videos etc.), and their accompanying metadata files, must comply with standards developed or endorsed by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (<http://www.fgdc.gov>). The FGDC has recently endorsed the use of International



Standards Organization (ISO) 19115 Parts 1 and 2 and representation standard ISO 19139 for documenting environmental data and information (<http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/metadata-standards/>). If you are documenting geospatial data in accordance with the FGDC Content Standard for Digital Geospatial Data this template identifies the minimum fields CRCP required for a complete record

([http://coris.noaa.gov/data/examples/bamf\\_min\\_crcp\\_fields.txt](http://coris.noaa.gov/data/examples/bamf_min_crcp_fields.txt)). All data products must be archived in multiple locations and provided to CRCP for long-term storage in accordance with the terms of the award and the award's Data/Information Sharing Plan, as described in Section IV(B)13; and

c) Other outputs, such as assessments, publications, summary reports, outreach and education materials, and other useful products, that provide resource managers and the public with timely and readily understandable information on coral reefs. These outputs must be identified in the original application as described in Section IV(B)4 and must be provided to NOAA at the end of the award period; products may be made available to the public via NOAA's Coral Reef Information System. As such, all products should be of publishable quality and include appropriate acknowledgement of the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as described at:

<http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/whoweare/graphic/>.

### C. Program Authority

Authority for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program is provided by Section 6403 (Coral Reef Conservation Program) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000 (16 U.S.C. 6401 et seq).

## II. Award Information

### A. Funding Availability

Funding for this program is subject to the availability of FY 2013 appropriations and is expected to range between approximately \$500,000 and approximately \$1,000,000. NOAA will not accept proposals requesting less than \$30,000 or more than \$80,000 in Federal support under this solicitation. It is expected that the average award size will be \$50,000.

There is no limit on the number of applications that can be submitted by the same applicant during the FY 2013 competitive grant cycle. However, multiple applications submitted by the same applicant must clearly identify different projects and must be successful in the competitive review process. The number of awards made as a result of this solicitation will depend on the number of eligible applications received, the amount of funds requested for each project, the merit and ranking of the proposals, and the amount of funds made available to the Coral Reef Conservation Program by Congress. In addition, funding

will be divided between the U.S. Pacific and U.S. Atlantic/Caribbean to meet requirements for geographic distribution of funds as described in the Coral Reef Conservation Act.

Attempts will also be made to fund one or more projects in each jurisdiction, provided that the project addresses priorities outlined above, it is identified as having sufficient merit, and it meets all other requirements as stipulated in this solicitation. Funds have not yet been appropriated for this program, and there is no guarantee that sufficient funds will be available to make awards for all qualified projects. Publication of this notice does not oblige NOAA to award any specific project or to obligate any available funds.

#### B. Project/Award Period

Projects with an award period of either 12 or 18 months will be considered for funding under this competition; the requested award start date must begin on the first day of the month and end on the last day of the month. Proposals may include an award start date no earlier than July 1, 2013. If an application for a financial assistance is selected for funding, the CRCP has no obligation to provide any additional funding in connection with that award in subsequent years. Funding for subsequent years will require submission of a new application, which will compete with other project proposals submitted during the subsequent competition. If an applicant wishes to continue work on a project funded through this program beyond the project period and obligated award funds have not been expended by the end of the period, the applicant must apply for a no-cost extension at least 30 days prior to the end date of the award. Renewal of an award to increase funding or to extend the period of performance is at the discretion of NOAA.

#### C. Type of Funding Instrument

Successful applicants will enter into a grant agreement with NOAA's National Ocean Service, Office of Ocean and Coastal Resource Management, Coral Conservation Division.

### III. Eligibility Information

#### A. Eligible Applicants

Institutions of higher education, non-profit organizations, commercial organizations, and local and Indian tribal government agencies are eligible to apply for funding under this funding category. U.S. federal, state, territory, and commonwealth governments and Regional Fishery Management Councils are not eligible to apply under this funding category.

NOAA employees are not permitted to assist in the preparation of applications or write letters of support for any application. NOAA CRCP staff is available to provide general information on programmatic goals and objectives, ongoing coral reef conservation

programs/activities, and regional funding priorities. For proposals that involve collaboration with current NOAA projects or staff, NOAA employees should provide a statement verifying that they are collaborating with the project applicant and confirming the degree and nature of the collaboration. Federal employee travel and salaries are not allowable costs under this funding category. All questions about this competition, including application procedures and materials and selection criteria, should be directed to the official Federal Program Officer listed under section VII. Agency Contacts.

#### B. Cost Sharing or Matching Requirement

All awards of financial assistance provided by the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (Grant Program) under the authority of the Coral Reef Conservation Act (Act) of 2000 are subject to the matching fund requirements described below. As per section 6403(b)(1) of the Act, Federal funds for any coral conservation project funded under this Grant Program may not exceed 50 percent of the total cost of the award. Therefore, any coral conservation project under this Grant Program requires a 1:1 contribution of non-Federal matching funds. Matching funds can come from a variety of public and private sources and can include in-kind goods and services such as private boat use and volunteer labor. Federal sources cannot be considered as matching funds, but can be described in the budget narrative to demonstrate additional leverage. Applicants are permitted to combine contributions from multiple non-federal partners in order to meet the 1:1 match requirement, as long as such contributions are not being used to match any Federal funds received under another award.

Applicants must specify in their proposal the source(s) of match and may be asked to provide letters of commitment to confirm stated match contributions. Applicants whose proposals are selected for funding will be bound by the percentage of cost sharing reflected in the award document signed by the NOAA Grants Officer and the recipient organization. Applicants should be prepared to carefully document matching contributions for each project selected for funding.

As per section 6403(b)(2) of the Coral Reef Conservation Act of 2000, the NOAA Administrator may waive all or part of the matching requirement if the Administrator determines that the project meets the following two requirements:

1. No reasonable means are available through which an applicant can meet the matching requirement, and,
2. The probable benefit of such project outweighs the public interest in such matching requirement.

In the case of a waiver request, the applicant must provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver including attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any

other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of match. Match waiver requests, including the appropriate justification, should be submitted as part of the final application package.

Please Note: applicants who are eligible to claim the matching funds exemption contained in 48 U.S.C. 1469a(d) should note the use of the waiver and the total amount of funds requested to be waived in the matching funds section of their application. Please contact the individual listed in section VII. Agency Contacts for more information about eligibility for this exemption.

#### C. Other Criteria that Affect Eligibility

This section was intentionally left blank.

### IV. Application and Submission Information

#### A. Address to Request Application Package

The standard application package is available at <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. For applicants without Internet access, an application package may be requested by contacting the Federal Program Officer and technical point of contact for the CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants, Liz Fairey. She can be reached at 301-427-8632, or by email at [Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov](mailto:Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov). Please contact Ms. Fairey with any administrative questions about this competition.

#### B. Content and Form of Application

The application process for this grant competition requires submission of a final and complete application on or before the submission date and time listed in Section IV (C) Submission Dates and Times. All application materials should use a legible 12-point font with 1-inch margins on all sides. For each application, the information provided in elements 1-6 (described below) should not exceed 30 pages total; the 30-page limit does not apply to required federal forms and other documentation (elements 7-15 below). Applications that exceed the 30-page limit will be shortened by removing pages at the end of the project narrative (element 3 below) before it is forwarded to merit reviewers. Because the pages excised from lengthy applications will not be reviewed, activities described therein will not be eligible for funding consideration. Reviewers will be instructed to deduct points from applications that are incomplete, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors, so applicants are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration.

Applications must follow the format described below; failure to follow these requirements will result in the application being eliminated from the competition.

Applications must include the following information in this order:

1. Application Cover Sheet:

A cover sheet must be included for each application. The cover sheet must list:

- a) Applicant name and contact information;
- b) Applicant organization;
- c) Primary and alternate points of contact;
- d) Contact information for the primary and alternate points of contact, including address, phone number, and e-mail address;
- e) Project title;
- f) Geographic location of the proposed project;
- g) Amount of Federal funding requested;
- h) Amount and source(s) of matching funds provided;
- i) Requested award start date (which must be the first day of the month), end date (which must be the last day of the month) and an award period of either 12 or 18-months duration. Proposals may include an award start date no earlier than July 1, 2013;
- j) The specific priority or priorities (see Section I.B) that the proposal will address. If the proposal addresses more than one priority, the applicant should list the priority that most closely reflects the overall objective of the proposal, followed by additional priorities; and
- k) Application summary - a brief, one-paragraph description of the application including an overview of the types of activities that are proposed for funding.

2. Project Summary (1-page limit):

Each application must include a one-page summary describing:

- a. Status and magnitude of the issue(s) in the jurisdiction where the project will occur and recent actions undertaken to address the issue(s);
- b. A description of how the project proposes to address the issue;
- c. The partners that will be involved in the project;
- d. A summary of the specific tasks to be accomplished and the proposed approach;
- e. Expected outcomes of the proposed work; and

- f. A description of how performance will be evaluated.

### 3. Project Narrative

The Project Narrative should comprise the majority of the application and must include a clear and thorough description of the proposed work. Each task within the project must be completely and accurately described. The elements of a good project narrative include:

- a. Identification of issue(s): Identify the problem/issue the project intends to address and describe its significance to the conservation of U.S. coral reef ecosystems.

- b. Project objectives: Identify the specific objective, listed under I. Funding Opportunity Description, B. Program Priorities, to which the project's objective(s) corresponds. Objectives should be simple and understandable, as specific and quantitative as possible, and attainable within the proposed timeframe, the described budget, and the human resources available. Projects should be accomplishment-oriented and identify obtainable goals, outcomes, and products. Describe expected outcomes, results, or products resulting from the specific activities undertaken during the project period.

- c. Project Narrative: The project narrative is the scientific or technical plan of activities that are to be accomplished. This description should provide sufficient detail in methodologies to allow a review of suitability of the proposed work and the likelihood of successful completion in the stated timeframe.

This information should include detailed descriptions of each activity, including the rationale for the activity, how it will be accomplished, specific milestones, who will do the work, and expected products. The narrative must include information on dissemination of the findings/results to resource managers, local communities, and other stakeholders as appropriate. The project narrative also needs to include information on how the project will be evaluated for success. If the work is one component of a larger project (or the activity is a pilot project for a larger initiative), and proposed activities will continue after the end of the grant period, describe future activities and potential future funding sources (and other mechanisms) to continue the work. If the goal of the project is to build capacity for improved conservation, describe proposed plans to ensure the activities continue into the future and how success will be evaluated.

- d. Milestones and timeline: List milestones, describing specific activities and associated time lines necessary to meet them. Describe the time lines in increments (e.g., month 1, month 2, etc. or 1st quarter, 2nd quarter, etc.), rather than by specific dates.

- e. List the programs (Federal, state, territorial or local governmental activities) this project would affect and describe how the project coordinates with relevant state, territorial, or local governmental and non-governmental agencies, and if applicable, NOAA activities.

f. Describe how the project will be organized and managed, and include the qualifications of the principal investigator(s) through a summary of professional backgrounds, curricula vitae, or resumes. The principal investigator may or may not be the applicant. However, if the applicant is not the principal investigator, there must be an explanation of the relationship between the applicant and principal investigator (e.g., the applicant may be responsible for managing the grant funds and the principal investigator will be responsible for completing the work). Please also include information about the specific responsibilities of other personnel funded through the proposal, including the technical and administrative points of contact as appropriate.

#### 4. Table of Products and Deliverables

Please provide a table to summarize the specific products or deliverables that will be produced under each task. All products that result from Federally-funded awards must be provided to NOAA within 90 days of the end of the award period and must be of publishable quality. NOAA may make award products available to the public, so recipients are encouraged to omit sensitive information (i.e., budget or salary information) from products and deliverables submitted to NOAA. Where appropriate, products should explicitly acknowledge the support of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program according to the guidance at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/whoweare/graphic/>.

The information in the table should include all products that will be developed in conjunction with the Federal funding provided through this award. For each entry, please indicate the task associated with the product or deliverable, what the working title of the deliverable will be, the type or format of the product (e.g., journal publication, public service announcement, watershed management plan, presentation, newsletter, metadata record, annual monitoring summary), and the expected date(s) when the product will be submitted to NOAA. NOAA will use this information to ensure that products are submitted to the agency in a timely manner and made available to the public whenever possible.

#### 5. Budget Narrative Description

In order to allow reviewers to fully evaluate the appropriateness of proposed costs, all applications must include a detailed breakdown of costs by standard cost category in table format with separate columns showing the relative contribution of Federal and non-Federal matching funds. The budget summary table must be accompanied by a detailed budget narrative to clearly explain and justify all proposed expenses. In addition, the budget narrative must also include information documenting the source(s) of all matching funds. The information in the budget narrative must match the dollar amounts on all required forms and describe, by category of expenditure, the total cost to accomplish the work. Budget categories should correspond to the Object Class Categories listed in Section B of the

Standard Form-424A. A copy of the SF-424A form may be found at:  
<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofs/grants/sf424a.pdf>.

a. Personnel costs, including salary and wages, should be broken out by named principal investigator (PI) and number of months requested per year per PI as a percentage of their normal salary rate. Support for each PI should be commensurate with their stated involvement, which may or may not correspond to their current position. Any unnamed personnel (graduate students, post-doctoral researchers, technicians) should be identified by their job title, and their personnel costs explained similar to PI personnel costs above. Fringe benefits should be identified separately from salary and wages; fringe benefit rates should be applied consistently, and should apply equally to both Federal and non-Federal (matching) funds. Funds for salaries and fringe benefits may be requested only for those personnel who are directly involved in implementing the proposed project and whose salaries and fringe benefits are directly related to specific products or outcomes of the proposed project. NOAA strongly encourages applicants to request reasonable amounts of funding for salaries and fringe benefits to ensure that your proposal is competitive.

b. Travel costs should be broken out by number of people traveling, destination and purpose of travel, and projected costs per person. Projected travel costs should be inclusive of transport costs, lodging costs, and per diem expenses for all travelers, which are to be described in detail in the budget narrative. If travel details for a particular trip are unknown, explain the basis for estimating proposed costs. Applicants must adhere to the provisions of the 'Fly America Act' and use U.S.-flagged vessels for transport, unless a specific waiver to this provision has been secured. Any foreign travel necessary to implement the project should be highlighted in the project and budget narratives since such travel may require additional clearances.

c. "Equipment" is non-expendable, tangible personal property with a unit cost of \$5,000 or more and a useful life of more than one year. Items that do not meet the equipment definition may be included under supplies. Each piece of equipment should be described separately and reference the type/model to be purchased and its contribution to the achievement of the project goals. General use equipment (i.e., computers, printers, etc.) must be used 100% for the proposed project if charged directly to the award; if the equipment will be used for multiple projects, only a portion of the expense that is commensurate with the actual use of the equipment during the project may be requested. Equipment purchases are not a priority under this competition.

d. Supplies should be itemized to the level of detail known or may be based on established historical costs. Whenever possible, applicants should include the quantity/number of units and cost per unit to justify expenses listed in the supplies category.



e. Contractual costs should be itemized separately, according to standard budget categories that appear in the SF-424A; all types of contractual costs should be included in the Contractual line on the SF-424A and explained in detail in the budget narrative. Applicants must indicate the basis for each contract's cost estimate and specify the products or services to be obtained through all contracts. Based on new reporting requirements contained in the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, all subawards of \$25,000 or greater, whether in the form of a subcontract or subgrant, must be documented per the Federal Subaward Reporting System (FSRS; [www.FSRS.gov](http://www.FSRS.gov)). A separate SF-424A for each subaward of \$25,000 or greater must be submitted with the final application to provide a detailed description of subaward expenditures.

f. Other costs should be listed by type of material or nature of expense and should be broken down by quantity/number of units and cost per unit if applicable.

g. Indirect costs may be requested if the applicant has an established a negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with the Federal government. Indirect costs are essentially overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded may not exceed 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal share. A copy of the current, approved NICRA with the Federal Government must be included with the final application package. If the applicant does not have a current NICRA and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

CRCP will not consider expenses associated with fees, fund-raising activities, or travel for activities not directly related to project implementation, travel or salaries for Federal employees, or profit as allowable costs in the proposed budget. The total costs of a project consist of all allowable costs incurred in accomplishing project activities during the project period. Project costs can only include support for activities conducted between the effective start date and end date of the award, and cannot include activities undertaken either before or after the agreed upon dates. Applicants will not be reimbursed for time expended or costs incurred in developing a project or in preparing an application, or in any discussions or negotiations with the agency prior to the award. Such expenditures may not be considered as part of the applicant's cost share or matching funds.

## 6. Supporting Documents

This section should include the qualifications of the primary project personnel and letters of support received from the relevant jurisdictional representatives, partners or communities

involved in the project. The applicant must provide evidence of support for the project by appropriate representatives of States or other government jurisdictions in which the project will be conducted. Additional letters of support are not required but are encouraged.

#### 7. Standard Form 424

At the time of final application submission, all applicants must submit a signed and dated copy of Standard Form SF-424, "Application for Federal Assistance," to indicate the total amount of Federal funds and non-Federal matching funds proposed for the project period. Original signatures are required on all hard copy SF-424 forms submitted by mail; an electronic signature is applied automatically when an application is successfully submitted via Grants.gov.

#### 8. Standard Form 424A

At time of application submission, all applicants are required to submit a SF-424A Budget Form. The first column of sections A and B should show the Federal funds requested, while the second column of sections A and B should show the non-Federal matching funds provided for the project. Total funding should be reflected in the final column of section B. Non-federal funding should be broken out by source in section C. The forecasted cash needs listed in Section D should be inclusive of all funding for the project; in the case of an 18-month project, each 'quarter' represents 4.5 months. Both Federal and non-Federal funds should be expended at a similar rate throughout the course of the project. Section E may be left blank. Section F should summarize the direct charges in line 21 and list the indirect charges requested and the rate used in line 22. Please note that completion of the SF-424A as described above represents NOAA's preference and may not be consistent with the instructions that accompany the SF-424A. All budget figures must match the funding requested on the application cover sheet and correspond with the descriptions contained in the project and budget narratives.

#### 9. Standard Form 424B

At time of application submission, all applicants are required to submit a signed SF-424B, Assurances for Non-Construction Programs.

#### 10. Standard Form CD-511

The applicant must also include a completed form CD-511, Certifications Regarding Debarment, Suspension, and Other Responsibility Matters, Drug-Free Workplace Requirements, and Lobbying.

#### 11. Permits

Please provide a list of all applicable permits that will be required to perform the proposed work and an indication of the status of any permits needed (e.g., not yet applied, permit application submitted/pending, permit granted, etc.) or a statement indicating that no permits are necessary. You must respond to this required element whether or not permits are required.

#### 12. Match waiver request (if applicable)

Preference under this competition will be given to applicants who provide a 1:1 or greater ratio of matching funds to Federal funds in accordance with the provisions of the Coral Reef Conservation Act. If the proposal lacks sufficient matching funds, the applicant may include a separate document in which the applicant requests a waiver to the matching funds requirement as described in section 6403(b)(2) of the Act. Although the CRCP will consider these requests, in most cases, waivers of matching funds will not be provided for applicants to this competition. The request for a waiver should be addressed to Jenny Waddell, NOAA National Ocean Service, 1305 East West Highway, 10th Floor, SSMC4, N/ORM, Silver Spring, MD 20910 and provide a detailed justification explaining the need for the waiver, the total amount of matching funds requested to be waived, attempts to obtain sources of matching funds, how the benefit of the project outweighs the public interest in providing match, and any other extenuating circumstances preventing the availability of match.

#### 13. Negotiated Indirect Cost Rate Agreement (if applicable)

For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded will not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs that the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated Federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal share.

If the applicant requests Indirect Costs as part of their application, a copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost rate agreement (NICRA) with the Federal Government must be included with the final application package. If the applicant does not have a current NICRA and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

#### 14. Other Federal Forms (if applicable)

Applicants may be required to disclose lobbying activities by filling out form SF-LLL (if applicable). Non-profit Organizations, Sole Proprietorship, Partnerships, Corporations and Joint Ventures are required to submit form CD-346 'Applicant for Federal Assistance'.

## 15. Data/Information Sharing Plan

Environmental data and information collected and/or created under NOAA grants or cooperative agreements must be made visible, accessible, and independently understandable to general users, free of charge or at minimal cost, in a timely manner (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created), except where limited by law, regulation, policy or by security requirements. To comply with NOAA Administrative Order 212-15, a Data/Information Sharing Plan of no more than two pages is required as part of the Project Narrative, and should include:

- a. descriptions of the types of environmental data and information to be created during the course of the project [environmental data includes recorded and derived observations and measurements of the physical, chemical, biological, geological, and geophysical properties and conditions of the oceans and atmosphere, as well as correlative data, such as socio-economic data and media (recordings, photos, videos etc.)];
- b. the tentative date by which data will be shared (typically no later than two years after the data are collected or created);
- c. the standards to be used for data/metadata format and content (NOAA has endorsed the use of ISO Standards for documenting environmental data and information);
- d. policies addressing data stewardship and preservation;
- e. procedures for providing access, data, and security (all data products must be archived in multiple locations and provided to NOAA for long-term storage); and
- f. where possible, prior experience in publishing such data.

The Data/Information Sharing Plan will be reviewed as part of the evaluation criteria described in Section V(A). The Data/Information Sharing Plan (and any subsequent revisions or updates) will be made available publicly at time of award and will be posted with the published data. The Data Sharing Plan provided in the final application will be made available by NOAA on behalf of the recipient at the start of the award period. Failure to share environmental data and information in accordance with the submitted Data/Information Sharing Plan may lead to disallowed costs and be considered by NOAA when making future award decisions.

Federal forms should be filled out and submitted on line at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) with the rest of the grant application. Applicants can obtain copies of the forms from: <http://apply07.grants.gov/apply/FormLinks?family=15>. If for any reason applicants are unable to submit through [www.Grants.gov](http://www.Grants.gov) or are concerned about possible problems associated with the Grants.gov system, they may provide a copy of their full application by mail. Applications submitted by mail must include all relevant application elements

described above, including a signed and dated SF-424 form, and must be stamped with an official U.S. Postal Service postmark on or before 5:00 pm EDT on November 1, 2012; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. Please address all hard-copy mailed applications to: ATTN: CRCP Domestic Grant Applications, Liz Fairey, NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, 14th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910. If an applicant chooses to submit their application exclusively by mail, the program requests that electronic copies of the project narrative and budget narrative be provided by email to expedite the review and selection process; however applications submitted by email without a corresponding mailed hard copy or Grants.gov application that was submitted before the deadline will not be accepted.

Applications submitted through [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) should include only three files in addition to the Federal forms: 1) cover sheet, project summary and project narrative; 2) budget table and budget narrative justification; and 3) all other attachments, including resumes/CVs, letters of support, and a list of permits (etc.) combined into one file. PDF is the preferred format for all application materials.

#### C. Submission Dates and Times

Complete applications must be submitted electronically via [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov) by 5:00 PM EDT on Thursday, November 1, 2012 to be considered for funding. If Grants.gov cannot be reasonably used, hard copy applications may be submitted by mail or provided to a delivery service and documented with a receipt by 5:00 PM EDT on Thursday, November 1, 2012. Applications postmarked or provided to a delivery service after that date and time will not be accepted. Applications submitted via U.S. Postal Service must have an official postmark; private metered postmarks are not acceptable. In any event, applications received more than 10 business days following the postmarked closing date will not be accepted.

There will be no extensions beyond these submission dates and times. If an application is not submitted through Grants.gov or postmarked by the deadline as described above, it will not be reviewed or considered for funding. If Internet access is unavailable, hard copies of applications may be submitted to: Liz Fairey, ATTN: CRCP Domestic Grant Applications, NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, 14th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910. Applications submitted by mail are required to include original signed and dated copies of Federal financial assistance forms. If an applicant chooses to submit their application exclusively by mail, the program requests that electronic copies of the project narrative and budget narrative be provided by email to expedite the review and selection process; however applications submitted by email without a corresponding mailed hard copy or Grants.gov application submitted before the application deadline will not be accepted.

If an applicant would like NOAA to confirm that all necessary application elements have been transmitted successfully, they must submit their application at least 48 hours prior to the due date to provide program staff sufficient time to review the application materials submitted. Program staff will attempt to identify any missing materials and notify applicants of known problems or issues prior to the application deadline.

All applicants should be aware that adequate time must be factored into applicant schedules for delivery of the application. Electronic applicants are advised that volume on Grants.gov may be extremely heavy, and that applications may take up to 48 hours to validate through the system. If Grants.gov is unable to accept applications electronically in a timely fashion, applicants are encouraged to exercise their option to submit applications in hard copy format via mail as described above as a 'fail-safe' mechanism to guarantee timely receipt of the application. Applicants should also allow adequate time to ensure a paper application will be received on time, taking into account that guaranteed overnight carriers are not always able to fulfill their guarantees.

#### D. Intergovernmental Review

Applications under this competition are subject to Executive Order 12372, Intergovernmental Review of Federal Programs. Any applicant submitting an application for funding is required to complete item 16 on SF-424 regarding clearance by the State Single Point of Contact established as a result of EO 12372. The following states and territories have elected to require review of applications by a Single Point of Contact: American Samoa, CNMI, the District of Columbia, Florida, Guam, Puerto Rico, Texas, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. This list is not meant to be exhaustive and only includes the locations where most coral reef projects occur; applicants proposing work in alternate locations are advised to establish whether their application is subject to the EO 12372 prior to submission by reviewing the list of contacts provided at: [http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants\\_spoc](http://www.whitehouse.gov/omb/grants_spoc).

#### E. Funding Restrictions

##### 1. Ineligible projects:

The following projects will not be eligible for funding: (1) Activities that constitute legally required mitigation for the adverse effects of an activity regulated or otherwise governed by state or Federal law; (2) Activities that constitute mitigation for natural resource damages under Federal or state law; and (3) Activities that are required by a separate consent decree, court order, statute or regulation.

##### 2. Cost Principles

Funds awarded cannot necessarily pay for all the costs that the recipient might incur in the course of carrying out the proposed work. Allowable costs are determined by reference

to the Office of Management and Budget Circulars 2 CFR, Part 230 "Cost Principles for Nonprofit Organizations"; 2 CFR, Part 220, "Cost Principles for Educational Institutions"; and 2 CFR, Part 225, "Cost Principles for State, Local and Indian Tribal Governments." Generally, costs that are allowable include salaries, fringe benefits, travel, equipment, supplies, and training, as long as the costs are determined to be "necessary and reasonable."

### 3. Permits and Approvals

It is the responsibility of the applicant to obtain all necessary Federal, state, and local government permits and approvals for the proposed work. For work within National Marine Sanctuaries, National Parks, National Seashores, and other Federally-designated protected areas, it is the responsibility of the applicant to request and obtain any necessary permits or letters of agreement from the appropriate government agencies prior to commencement of an award.

Applicants are expected to design their proposals so that they minimize potential adverse impact on the environment. If applicable, documentation of requests or approvals of environmental permits must be included in the proposal package. Applications will be reviewed to ensure that they have sufficient environmental documentation to allow program staff to determine whether the proposal is categorically excluded from further National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) analysis or whether an environmental assessment is necessary to conform to the requirements of NEPA. For those applications needing an environmental assessment, applicants will be informed after the peer review stage and will be requested to assist in the preparation of the assessment. Final approval of the award and authorization for expenditure of funds are dependent on the applicant obtaining the necessary permits and approval of the NEPA analysis by NOAA. Applicants are encouraged to review the Coral Program's Programmatic Environmental Assessment (PEA) to confirm that their proposed activities will fall within the scope of the PEA in advance of formal NEPA review and approval; the Coral Program PEA is available at: [http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/resources/coral\\_pea\\_final\\_05.pdf](http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/workwithus/funding/grants/resources/coral_pea_final_05.pdf).

Failure to apply for and/or obtain Federal, state, and local permits, approvals, letters of agreement, or failure to provide environmental analyses where necessary (i.e., NEPA environmental assessment) will delay or prevent the award of funds for projects that have been preliminarily selected for funding.

### 4. Other

Expenditures on large equipment and/or infrastructure are not a priority for funding under this program.

### F. Other Submission Requirements

This section was intentionally left blank.

Ms. Liz Fairey, ATTN: CRCP Domestic Grant Applications, NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, 14th floor, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

## V. Application Review Information

### A. Evaluation Criteria

Applications that are deemed eligible under this competition and meet the minimum requirements established for the competition will be reduced to meet the 30-page application limit as described in Section IV(B) "Content and Form of Application" before being forwarded to independent reviewers with relevant expertise for evaluation. Reviewers will be asked to assign scores to proposals ranging from 0 to 100 points based on the five standard NOAA evaluation criteria and the respective weights specified below. Reviewers will be instructed to deduct points from applications that are incomplete, confusing, unclear, or contain numerous typographical errors, so applicants are advised to review their application materials closely before they are submitted to the agency for consideration.

1. Importance and Applicability of Proposal (Score = 0-30): This criterion ascertains whether there is intrinsic value in the proposed work and whether the project is relevant to the goals and objectives of NOAA's Coral Reef Conservation Program and jurisdictional coral reef management priorities. Applications will be evaluated on how well the project goals and objectives link to the broader goals and objectives of the program and clear identification of the direct benefits of the project to coral reef conservation. Reviewers will consider:

- \* Whether the proposed work directly addresses the CRCP's Goals and Objectives and/or relevant Jurisdictional Management Priorities;

- \* The extent to which the project is expected to deliver specific tangible results and products that relate directly to obtainable coral reef conservation goals, objectives, and outcomes; and

- \* The need for the proposed coral reef activity in the jurisdiction; the contribution of potential outcomes, results, or products to overall coral reef conservation and management in that jurisdiction; and the degree of collaboration with local, state and territorial governments.

2. Technical/ Scientific Merit (Score = 0-30): This criterion assesses whether the approach is technically sound and/or innovative, if the methods are appropriate, and whether there are clear project goals and objectives. Applications will be scored based on their clear



identification of project methods and the suitability of those methods in achieving the stated outcome, and for evaluating the success or failure of the project in terms of meeting its original goals and objectives. Reviewers will evaluate:

- \* The completeness and adequacy of detail in the project description and methodology, including a realistic implementation plan achievable in the 12 or 18-month project period, and sufficient detail to allow a NEPA analysis;
- \* The overall technical feasibility of the project, including whether the proposed approach is technically sound and uses appropriate methods that are likely to achieve project goals and objectives;
- \* Whether there are effective mechanisms to evaluate project success, including clearly stated coral reef conservation objectives and goals, the likelihood of meeting milestones and achieving anticipated results specified in the statement of work; and
- \* The suitability of products and deliverables, including applicability to relevant audiences, innovativeness, extent of duplicity with previous work, and likelihood of producing high quality results and outcomes that benefit coral reef stakeholders and ecosystems.

3. Overall Qualification of Applications (Score = 0-10): This criterion ascertains whether the applicant possesses the necessary education, experience, training, facilities, and administrative resources to accomplish the project and administer Federal funds appropriately. The overall qualifications of the project will be evaluated based on:

- \* The capacity of the applicant and associated project personnel to conduct the scope and scale of the proposed work, as indicated by the qualifications and past experience of the project leaders and/or partners in designing, implementing and effectively managing and overseeing projects that benefit living marine resources. Reviewers will consider awards previously made to the Principal Investigator and any outcomes, results, or products resulting from such awards. Communities and/or organizations submitting their first coral reef conservation project may not be able to document past experience, and therefore will be evaluated on their potential to effectively manage and oversee all project phases and on the basis of their organization's stated mission and the qualifications of the applicant(s).
- \* The facilities and/or administrative resources and capabilities available to the applicant to support and successfully manage coral reef conservation projects and administer Federal funds, including the availability of technical expertise to guide the project to a successful completion.

4. Project Costs (Score = 0-10): This criterion evaluates the budget to determine if it is realistic and commensurate with the project needs and time frame. The itemized costs and

the overall budget must be justified and allocated appropriately. NOAA expects that Federal funds provided under each award will leverage non-Federal funding or in-kind resources that demonstrate collaboration and encourage partnerships among government, communities, industry, non-governmental organizations, and academia. Applicants that are able to secure adequate non-Federal matching funds for the proposed project, especially those that are able to secure cash contributions, are likely to score higher on this criterion.

5. Outreach and Education (Score = 0-20): This criterion assesses whether the project provides a focused and effective education and outreach strategy regarding conservation of our nation's coral reefs. The reviewers will evaluate:

- \* Whether information about the project's results will be disseminated to the appropriate user groups, and whether the proposed outreach/education methods are appropriate for this type of information;

- \* The potential of the project to foster long-term conservation, improved management, and community involvement in conservation and stewardship of coral reef resources;

- \* The level of support for the work, as demonstrated by letters from partners and relevant government agencies; and

- \* The extent to which local partners are involved in project activities, the availability of educational opportunities and/or trainings to build capacity for future conservation initiatives, and/or efforts to build greater public understanding of threats to coral reef conservation and instill a conservation ethic among user groups.

## B. Review and Selection Process

Screening, review, and selection procedures will take place in four steps, including

(1) initial evaluation by the Competition Manager; (2) external technical merit review; (3) internal program review and recommendation; and (4) final selection by the Selecting Official. The external technical merit review will generate comments for each application from at least three individual independent merit reviewers who are familiar with the type of project or subject matter addressed. The Selecting Official will make the final decision regarding which applications will be funded based upon the numerical ranking of the applications, the evaluations by the technical reviewers, internal program review and recommendations, and the selection factors in Section IV (C) below.

1. Initial Evaluation of the Applications: The initial screening by the Competition Manager will ensure that application packages meet the minimum requirements established for the competition. Application packages will be screened to ensure that they were received by the due date (see Section IV (C) Submission Dates and Times), meet requirements

regarding the Federal funding amount and non-Federal matching amounts, and include all necessary application elements described in Section IV (B). Applications that pass this initial screening will be submitted to independent merit reviewers for external technical review.

2. External Technical Review: Technical review is conducted by a minimum of three external reviewers with expertise regarding the type of work or subject matter proposed in the application. Each reviewer will individually evaluate and score applications (0-100 points) using the evaluation criteria provided in Section V(A) above. This review may involve experts from both NOAA and non-NOAA organizations. The technical reviewers' ratings will be used to produce a rank order of the proposals. No consensus advice will be given by the technical reviewers. NOAA will also request and consider written comments on proposed projects from each state, territorial, or Federal agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted.

Applications may also be provided to the respective government management agency (e.g., U.S. Coral Reef Task Force Point of Contact) from the jurisdiction where the proposed project will occur for further review. The Point of Contact will be asked to prioritize proposals and provide comments on all applications submitted for work in their jurisdiction. This is intended to enhance coordination of coral reef conservation activities in each jurisdiction and to ensure proposed activities are appropriate and do not duplicate other efforts. Applicants are encouraged to coordinate with State and Territorial point of contact agencies prior to submission of their applications in order to obtain letters of support from relevant management authorities.

3. Internal Program review: The Federal Program Officer and other CRCP staff will evaluate comments and scores provided by the technical reviewers, consider the priorities identified by the state, territorial, commonwealth agencies, and conduct further analysis to identify any major issues, shortcomings or problems with the application. The Federal Program Officer will summarize comments received on each proposal and identify modifications that may be needed prior to final selection. The reviewer comments, composite project scores, rank order, and a summary of the concerns (if any) identified through the technical review process and internal review will be presented to the Selecting Official. The Selecting Official, in consultation with CRCP staff, will identify proposals to be recommended for funding.

4. Final Selection. Based on the cumulative reviews, the additional selection factors described below, and the ability of the applicant to address any concerns identified during the review process, the Selecting Official will make preliminary funding recommendations. Not all activities submitted under a single proposal may be deemed appropriate for funding, and the Selecting Official or Federal Program Officer may recommend alternate activities as appropriate. For a proposal to be selected for funding, the applicant may be required to

modify objectives, work plans and budgets, and provide supplemental information required by the agency prior to the award.

### C. Selection Factors

The merit review ratings will be used to provide a rank order to the Selecting Official for final funding recommendations. The Federal Program Officer may make selection recommendations to the Selecting Official based on application of the selection factors listed below. The Selecting Official shall award in rank order unless the proposal is justified to be selected out of rank order based upon one or more of the following factors:

1. Availability of funding;
2. Balance/distribution of funds;
  - a. Geographic distribution of funds;
  - b. By type of institutions;
  - c. By type of partners;
  - d. By research areas;
  - e. By project types;
3. Whether this project duplicates other projects funded or considered for funding by NOAA or other federal agencies;
4. Program priorities and policy factors found in sections I (A and B) of this announcement;
5. Applicant's prior award performance;
6. Partnerships and/or Participation of targeted groups; and
7. Adequacy of information necessary for NOAA staff to make a NEPA determination and draft necessary documentation before recommendations for funding are made to the NOAA Grants Officer.

### D. Anticipated Announcement and Award Dates

The competitive selection process and subsequent notification of applications being considered for funding are expected to be complete by January 31, 2013. Pending a timely Congressional appropriation, funds are expected to be awarded during the late spring and summer of 2013; as such, applicants may not request an award start date prior to July 1, 2013. Unsuccessful applicants will be notified that their proposal was not selected for

funding once the selected applications have been finalized. Unsuccessful applications will be kept on file for a period of approximately 12 months and then destroyed.

## VI. Award Administration Information

### A. Award Notices

Applicants that scored highly during the merit review process and continue to be considered for funding will be notified by January 31, 2013. Applicants may be requested to modify activities, budgets or other components of the project, and possibly incorporate reduced funding levels as recommended through the review process, and submit a revised application before final decisions are made. The exact amount of funds to be awarded, the final scope of activities, the project duration, and other relevant application details will be determined in pre-award negotiations among the applicant, NOAA GMD, and CRCP staff. The earliest start date for projects will be July 1, 2013 dependent upon availability of Federal funding as provided by Congress, acceptable completion of all NOAA/applicant negotiations including NEPA analysis and permit requirements, and the provision of other supporting documentation as requested.

Projects should not be initiated in expectation of Federal funding until the applicant has received official notice of an award from the NOAA Grants Officer and has reviewed and accepted the terms of the award. Applicants are hereby given notice that funds have not yet been appropriated for the program described in this notice and are advised that the competition described herein may be subject to cancellation due to unavailability of funding or revision of agency priorities. In no event will NOAA or the Department of Commerce be responsible for proposal preparation costs. Publication of this announcement does not obligate NOAA to award funding for specific projects or obligate available funds.

Award documents provided by NOAA may contain special award conditions limiting the use of funds for activities that have outstanding environmental compliance requirements. These special award conditions may also include other compliance requirements for the award as applicable and will be applied on a case-by-case basis. Applicants are strongly encouraged to review award documents carefully before accepting a Federal award so they are fully aware of the relevant Standard Terms and Conditions as well as any Special Award Conditions that have been placed on the award.

Once an application has been selected for funding and an award has been extended to the applicant, the application materials will be considered public documents and may be released to individuals outside the agency pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act. The CRCP reserves the right to share application materials with relevant individuals and organizations for the purposes of improved coordination and collaboration.

To enable the use of a universal identifier and to enhance the quality of information available to the public as required by the Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006, to the extent applicable, any proposal awarded in response to this announcement will be required to use the Central Contractor Registration (CCR) and Dun and Bradstreet Universal Numbering System (DUNS number) and be subject to reporting requirements as identified in OMB guidance published at 2 CFR Parts 25, 170 (2010) [http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr25_main_02.tpl) and [http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170\\_main\\_02.tpl](http://ecfr.gpoaccess.gov/cgi/t/text/text-idx?c=ecfr&tpl=/ecfrbrowse/Title02/2cfr170_main_02.tpl)

-B. Administrative and National Policy Requirements

1. Indirect Costs:

The budget may include an amount for indirect costs if the applicant has an established, current negotiated indirect cost rate agreement with the Federal government. Indirect costs are overhead costs for basic operational functions (e.g., utilities, rent, and insurance) that are incurred for common or joint objectives and, therefore, cannot be identified specifically within a particular project. For this solicitation, the Federal share of the indirect costs awarded will not exceed the lesser of either the indirect costs that the applicant would be entitled to if the negotiated Federal indirect cost rate were used or 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed. For those situations in which the use of the applicant's indirect cost rate would result in indirect costs greater than 25 percent of the Federal direct costs proposed, the difference may be counted as part of the non-Federal matching requirement. A copy of the current, approved negotiated indirect cost agreement with the Federal government must be included with the application. If the applicant does not have a current negotiated rate and plans to seek reimbursement for indirect costs, documentation necessary to establish a rate must be submitted within 90 days of receiving an award.

2. National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA):

As required by the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA), NOAA must analyze the potential environmental impacts of applications that request Federal funding. Detailed information on NOAA compliance with NEPA can be found at the following websites: <http://www.nepa.noaa.gov/>; NOAA Administrative Order 216-6 for NEPA ([http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap\\_216/naos\\_216\\_6.html](http://www.corporateservices.noaa.gov/~ames/NAOs/Chap_216/naos_216_6.html)); and Council on Environmental Quality implementation regulations ([http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc\\_ceq.htm](http://ceq.hss.doe.gov/nepa/regs/ceq/toc_ceq.htm)). Consequently, as part of the application package, applicants are required to provide detailed information on the activities to be conducted, locations, sites, species and habitats that may be affected, construction activities, and all other environmental concerns that may exist (e.g., the use and disposal of hazardous

or toxic chemicals, introduction of non-indigenous species, impacts to endangered and threatened species, aquaculture projects, and impacts to coral reef systems, etc.).

Applicants proposing coral reef conservation activities that cannot be categorically excluded from further NEPA analysis or that are not covered by the Programmatic Environmental Assessment for the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Grant Program (PEA) and Finding of No Significant Impact (FONSI) will be informed after the peer review stage and may be requested to assist in the preparation of an environmental assessment prior to an award being made, or review a copy of an environmental assessment that covers proposed activities if one exists. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for rejection of an application. In some cases, if additional information is required after an application is selected, funds can be withheld by the NOAA Grants Officer under a special award condition requiring the recipient to submit additional environmental compliance information sufficient to enable NOAA to make an assessment on any impacts that a project may have on the environment. The Coral Reef Conservation Program's PEA and FONSI can be found at: <http://www.nmfs.noaa.gov/habitat/ead/ecosysdocs/CoralPEAFinal.pdf>.

In addition to providing specific information that will serve as the basis for any required impact analyses, applicants may also be requested to assist NOAA in drafting of an environmental assessment, if NOAA determines an assessment is required. Applicants will also be required to cooperate with NOAA in identifying and implementing feasible measures to reduce or avoid any identified adverse environmental impacts of their proposal. The failure to do so shall be grounds for rejection of an application.

### 3. Digital Geospatial Data

Recipients must comply with Executive Order 12906 as amended by E.O. 13286 regarding any and all geospatial data collected or produced with funding awarded through this competition. This includes documenting all geospatial data in accordance with standards developed or endorsed by the Federal Geographic Data Committee (FGDC). Executive Order 12906 can be found at: <http://www.archives.gov/federal-register/executive-orders/pdf/12906.pdf>, and Executive Order 13286 can be found at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2003-03-05/pdf/03-5343.pdf>

The FGDC has recently endorsed the use of International Standards Organization (ISO) 19115 Parts 1 and 2 and representation standard ISO 19139 for documenting environmental data and information (<http://www.ncddc.noaa.gov/metadata-standards/>). A set of the minimum metadata fields required for all data products produced via awards under this competition can be found at: [http://coris.noaa.gov/data/examples/bamf\\_min\\_crcep\\_fields.txt](http://coris.noaa.gov/data/examples/bamf_min_crcep_fields.txt).

### 4. Financial Assistance Award Package

The CRCP uses only the existing NOAA Federal financial assistance awards package requirements per 15 CFR parts 14 and 24.

## 5. Paperwork Reduction Act

Notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person is required to respond to, nor shall any person be subject to a penalty for failure to comply with a collection-of-information, subject to the requirements of the Paperwork Reduction Act, 44 U.S.C. 3501 et seq., unless that collection-of-information displays a currently valid OMB control number. Forms SF-424, SF-424A, SF-424B, and SF-LLL and CD-346 have been approved by OMB under the respective control numbers 0348-0043, 0348-0044, 0348-0040, 0348-0046 and 0605-0001, respectively.

This notice also contains a collection-of-information requirement under the Paperwork Reduction Act, which has been approved by OMB under control number 0648-0448. The public reporting burden is estimated to average one hour per response for comments on a proposed project from each agency with jurisdiction over coral reef ecosystems in the area where the project is to be conducted and one hour per response for a request for a waiver of matching funds. This estimate includes the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of these data collections, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to the NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program, N/OCRM, National Ocean Service, 1305 East-West Highway, Silver Spring, MD 20910.

## 6. Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements

The Department of Commerce Pre-Award Notification Requirements for Grants and Cooperative Agreements contained in the Federal Register notice of February 11, 2008 (Vol. 73, No. 28 page 7696) are applicable to this solicitation via <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/>

## 7. Award Standard Terms and Conditions

Successful applicants that accept a NOAA award under this solicitation will be bound by Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions, which can be found at:

[http://www.osc.doc.gov/oam/grants\\_management/policy/documents/DOC\\_Standard\\_Terms\\_and\\_Conditions\\_03-01-2008.pdf](http://www.osc.doc.gov/oam/grants_management/policy/documents/DOC_Standard_Terms_and_Conditions_03-01-2008.pdf)

## 8. Public Access to Award Documents and Products

Applications that are supported with Federal funds may be provided to members of the public under certain circumstances. Products resulting from funded projects may be made available by NOAA as described previously and in the next section. Data generated by



award recipients will be shared according to the provisions included in the award's data sharing plan [see Section IV(B)15].

### C. Reporting

All performance and financial reports shall be submitted through the recipient's NOAA Grants Online account in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions. Progress on each award is communicated to NOAA in the form of performance progress reports, which are outlined in 15 CFR Part 14: Uniform Administrative Requirements for Grants and Other Agreements with Institutions of Higher Education, Hospitals and Other Non-Profit Organizations or 15 CFR Part 24: Grants and Cooperative Agreements with State and Local Governments. Performance reports must be submitted on a semi-annual schedule no later than 30 days following the end of each 6-month period from the start date of the award. Financial reports must be submitted every 6 months by the end of April and October during the period of the award in accordance with the Department of Commerce, Financial Assistance Standard Terms and Conditions.

A comprehensive final report is due 90 days after the award expiration date along with copies of all products that are developed under the award. Copies of all materials (such as but not limited to brochures, posters, videos, DVDs, publications, reports, management plans, workshop proceedings etc.) produced through the award, along with copies of any reports submitted by subcontractors as part of the award, must be provided to the program office within 90 days of the end of the award. All products should be of publishable quality, should include a citation, and should include appropriate acknowledgement of the support provided by NOAA Coral Reef Conservation Program as described at: <http://coralreef.noaa.gov/aboutcrp/whoweare/graphic/>. Because products may be made available to the public via the Coral Reef Information System (CoRIS, <http://coris.noaa.gov>), it is the recipient's responsibility to ensure that products are professionally written and edited; they do not contain sensitive financial information; and that media products are 508 compliant (<http://www.section508.gov/index.cfm?fuseAction=stdsSum>). Except where limited by law, regulation, policy or security, recipients are requested to include a statement on the front page of all products to indicate the material is "Approved for public release; distribution is unlimited."

The Federal Funding Accountability and Transparency Act of 2006 requires that recipients of Federal financial assistance awards provide detailed information about all subawards and executive compensation provided through awards made by the Federal government. As of March 1, 2011, all first-tier subawards over \$25,000 must be described in detail and accompanied by a separate SF-424A budget form to account for all subaward expenses.

## VII. Agency Contacts

The Federal Program Officer and technical point of contact for the CRCP Domestic Coral Reef Conservation Grants is Liz Fairey. She can be reached by phone at 301-427-8632, by fax at 301-713-1594, or by email at [Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov](mailto:Liz.Fairey@noaa.gov). Her mailing address is: Liz Fairey, NOAA Fisheries Office of Habitat Conservation, 1315 East West Highway, SSMC3, 14th floor, Silver Spring, MD, 20910.

## VIII. Other Information

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